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ABSTRACT

Components of the Reading/Writing Skills Center (RWSC) at General College, University of Minnesota, are described and assessed in this paper. The paper discusses changes made in the RWSC during 1978-79; procedures followed when students first come to the RWSC; the training and responsibilities of the undergraduate RWSC tutors; student evaluations of the RWSC walk-in tutoring service; and the introductory and evaluatory procedures followed in RWSC courses, which are self-paced and are individually administered by tutors. It then provides data about six RWSC courses that separately focus on: (1) spelling and punctuation skills; (2) grammatical sentences and organized paragraphs; (3) communication skills (fundamentals of usage and style); (4) study skills, reading comprehension, and vocabulary; (5) communication skills (individual study); and (6) writing (individual study). For each course, the paper outlines its structure and content and provides various data suggesting its degree of success, such as pretest/posttest scores, course enrollment figures, or course completion data. Finally, the paper presents the results of course evaluation forms given to students in RWSC courses, which indicated a positive student response to the courses. It is concluded that the RWSC was successful during 1978-79. (GT)

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GENERAL COLLEGE'S READING/WRITING SKILLS CENTER:
ITS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
1978-1979

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PREPARED BY: SANDRA M. DYLLA
COORDINATOR, READING/WRITING SKILLS CENTER
April 1, 1980

CS005476

In September, 1978, General College's Reading/Writing Skills Center (RWSC) entered a new era--what might be called a second stage in its growth and development into a major college and university resource. Several changes signalled the beginning of this second stage: thirty thousand dollars was committed to the RWSC as a line item in the ACP budget; a full-time coordinator of professorial rank was hired; and three new variable credit skill development courses were added to the RWSC curriculum. In recognition of the increased scope of the RWSC, an additional room was assigned to the RWSC for use in tutoring and testing; the new coordinator was given the assistance of a half-time graduate student in reading, to assist in programmatic changes, tutor training and development, and administration of RWSC courses.

Clearly, General College and, specifically, the Arts, Communication and Philosophy Division had committed themselves to support of the RWSC as a necessary and permanent resource of the college. This report is an attempt to recognize that committment and to be accountable to it.

Fall quarter was a time of transition and experimentation for the Coordinator, Sandra M. Dylla; her graduate teaching assistant, Karl Edwards; and their staff of approximately 20 undergraduate teaching assistants, only three of whom had previous experience. The Reading/Writing Skills Center had grown tremendously since its beginnings in 1972. The size of the staff had tripled; hours had been extended; and the course offerings had tripled. These increases would bring about some administrative complications and dilemmas even without the almost totally new staff, but with the new staff and new courses, significant effort and cooperation were needed, especially from

the tutors who would actually deliver the courses.

Every week during the fall brought changes, changes to which the staff had to adapt and which had to be made reasonable to the students.

The first week, for example, showed the true stamina of the tutors and the genuine patience of the students. In only two of the courses was it easy to orient students, the continuing GC 1405, "Fundamentals of Usage and Style," in which the text, a programmed grammar, came with its own testing package; and GC 1403, "Improving Spelling, Punctuation"--a new course designed by Professor William Stockdale which operated with a pre-test for each unit, a program for each unit and a post-test for each unit. GC 1404 and GC 1406, the other two new courses, were carefully planned and designed, but the amount and complexity of the apparatus confused tutors and students alike. In addition, the course materials for GC 1406 were not ready to be distributed until the morning of the first day of classes, so tutors had no choice but to give students a copy of the syllabus and ask them to return it later in the week to begin the course (after the staff had a chance to familiarize themselves with it). Finally, the coordinator suddenly discovered 1409 , but did not immediately discover how it was used, how courses were structured, etc. Each week of fall quarter brought similar problems and difficulties, and it would be foolish to enumerate them. They were the natural outcome of sudden expansion and simultaneous staff changes.

What is important is that out of this chaos, with all of its potential for disaster, came creative structuring of the RWSC so that the RWSC whose doors opened at the beginning of Winter, 1979, was very different from its fall ancestor. Many of the changes that occurred during the fall quarter

were physical and operational changes, often inspired by suggestion of the tutors. The tutors met with the coordinator and assistant in weekly fall seminars, which were ostensibly training seminars, but in actuality, were problem-solving sessions during most of the quarter. From those seminars, and from the work of the assistant and coordinator, came the overall operational structure of the RWSC.

The guiding principle in operating the RWSC is "invisible" structure. If too much in the way of rules and regulations were imposed upon our students, the flexibility of independent study would be gone, and furthermore, the RWSC might not attract the very students who need its services, but who do not want to face a lot of "red-tape" to get them. To explain how the center operates, it would be best to follow a typical student in his first encounter with RWSC.

The door to the RWSC is open and to the right of it is a desk where one of the staff members is seated. A student walks in, looks around hesitantly, and the staff member at the desk immediately asks if she can be of service. If it is early in the quarter, it is likely that the student is beginning a new RWSC course; if so, the student is directed to one of the tables where he meets a tutor who will help to explain how the course will operate and to set up the student's course folder so he can begin immediately. All course folders have common features: each has a color-coded label to identify the course, with the student's name on the label; each has a course information card on the outside that includes essential information about the student and course (name, address, phone, arranged hours--at least one per credit--, credits enrolled in, units to be completed, records of test scores, grade); each has a data sheet inside the

folder that repeats some information (name, address, phone, college of enrollment, student #, and arranged hours) but which is used to log a student's progress in the course. Each time students come into the Skills Center to work on their courses, what they do, their progress, and the amount of time they spend are logged by one of the tutors. When the course folder is set up, the tutor explains how the specific course works (its goals, how it is evaluated, what the book is) with a syllabus which is given to the student. The student is then given a pretest in the course and told how to begin the work.

By the second week of the quarter another type of student begins to appear in the doorway of the RWSC. Students begin to appear for "walk-in" tutoring. The tutor at the desk matches the student with an available tutor, and the tutor and student work on whatever project the student brings in. At the close of their conference, they fill out a contact sheet that allows the RWSC to monitor the number of walk-in contacts, how often the same student comes in, the course for which she is requesting service, and the amount of time spent with a tutor. If a tutor is not immediately available (as happens during busy late morning and early afternoon hours), the student's name is taken and she is assisted by a tutor as soon as one is free, generally within 5 to 15 minutes.

Within a few visits to the RWSC, most students automatically stop at the desk, either to pick up their folders and continue work on a particular course or to get tutorial assistance. The entire process of arranging for a student to work with a tutor is handled by the tutor who is working at the desk, where contact sheets and course folders are readily available.

The Tutorial Staff

The Reading/Writing Skills Center is staffed primarily by undergraduate teaching assistants who are juniors and seniors. Tutors meet in weekly seminars to discuss procedures, methods of tutoring, specific course information, and student needs; to train as tutors; and to review course information, etc. The tutors who work in the Skills Center have varied academic interests and backgrounds (majors include such areas as economics, pre-law, pre-med, education, social work, psychology, etc. as well as the more traditional English and journalism), but they share two traits: 1) they are adaptable, as one would have to be in working with the variety of areas in RWSC courses (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraphing, grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, study skills) and the needs of walk-in students (which vary from assistance on Writing Lab essays to term papers, course projects, business letters, program proposals, etc.; 2) they are able to work independently, sharing responsibility with the coordinator for student progress in the courses they take.

Tutoring students in courses and on a walk-in basis is only one part of the tutor's area of responsibility. The tutors all administer and evaluate tests and other written assignments; keep records on students' attendance and progress in their courses; record walk-in contacts; plan, help to carry out, and evaluate individual study contracts with 1409 and 1429 students; recommend new materials and supplementary materials for courses; and monitor the desk to see that all students receive the assistance they need. In addition, each tutor has one or more assigned duties each quarter to assist in the smooth and effective operation of the RWSC. Several tutors monitor course attendance on a regular basis. One of the

students' biggest difficulties with independent study courses is developing the self-discipline necessary to continue working in a course that has no regular classroom meetings with an instructor. Therefore, several tutors check enrolled students' course attendance weekly to see who may need encouragement to continue their courses. Students who have not come into the Skills Center for a week are contacted by phone calls from tutors, encouraging them to return. If a student has not come into the Center for two weeks, the phone call is followed by a letter from the Skills Center, again asking that the student stop by as soon as possible. The tutors make this kind of follow-up possible. In addition, during the seventh week of the quarter, the tutors send a mailing to all enrolled RWSC students, outlining RWSC hours for the remainder of the quarter, procedures for finishing the course or receiving incompletes, and the work the student has left to complete, with a personal comment about the individual student's progress.

Other tutors regularly check the RWSC's supplies of course materials and tests, check the accuracy of file records, and record and file walk-in records. Finally, each quarter in 1978-1979, several tutors met in small seminars to improve their expertise in specialized areas. During Fall, 1978, several tutors worked with Professor Arrington on the administration and teaching of GC 1404; another group worked with Karl Edwards in Winter, 1979, learning how to tutor the very poorly skilled reader and how to administer the Woodcock Diagnostic Reading Mastery Test; and during Spring, 1979, a third group worked with Sally Lund-Chirinos, learning special techniques for working with students for whom English is a second language.

Serving the Students

I. Walk-in Tutoring

The Reading/Writing Skills Center's free "walk-in" tutoring service continued to draw increasing numbers of students each quarter. Throughout 1978-1979 the numbers of walk-in contacts in the Skills Center increased each quarter, as did the average number of contacts per student. In all, there were approximately 1800 walk-in contacts for tutoring in the Skills Center last year, averaging about twenty minutes each. Records for Spring, 1979, show that about 13.5% of these students were non-General College students.

Walk-in Student Contacts, 1978-79

	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	TOTALS
Total # of contacts:	555	598	649	1802
Total # of students:	279	229	237	745
Average # of contacts per student:	2.0	2.6	2.7	2.43
# of students with 1 contact:	164	112	112	388
# of students with 2-4 contacts:	92	80	85	257
# of students with 5-10 contacts:	21	34	32	87
# of students with 11 or more contacts:	2	3	8	13
Approx. # of non-native* speakers:	40	31	40	111
Approx. # of non-General College students:	NR	NR	32	

The figures alone might indicate that the "walk-in" tutoring program is a success, at least in terms of numbers of students who take advantage of the service. In addition, during the last three weeks of Spring quarter, a student evaluation of the Reading/Writing Skills Centers walk-in tutoring service was conducted. After each student finished meeting with a tutor,

he was asked to evaluate the tutoring service by filling in an anonymous questionaire and depositing it in a collection box. The results of the questionaire allow us to draw some additional conclusions about the walk-in service. First of all, while 65% of the 40 students who responded said they first heard about the RWSC from a course instructor (other most common responses were: from friends and/or other students, 15%; from orientation, 7.5%; and from seeing it, 7.5%,), only 45% gave an instructor's referral as their reason for first coming to the Center. Over 50% of the students took responsibility for coming to the RWSC "on their own." Other questions of general information revealed that half of the students who responded had used the Skills Center's tutoring service 2 to 5 times, 12 (30%) more than five times, and 8 (20%) had come in for the first time. 20% of the students said they tended to work with the same tutor each time they came in; the rest said they worked with any of the available tutors (or had not been in to the Center more than once). The evaluative statements were rated on a six-point scale from 1 (Very Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Very Strongly Agree), with the mean responses to each statement ranging from 4.811 to 5.027.

Finally the students were asked to write down three things they thought would improve the RWSC and its services. While most of the students did not respond to this section, the responses of those who did indicated that while several felt is was "good as is" and several made suggestions for improving tutoring, the biggest overall concern involved a desire for more . . . more space, comfort, freedom form noise, more tutors, more hours. The students' comments echoed the staff's concern about lack of space, noisy facilities, and lack of enough tutors during busy hours.

Following is a summary of the response to the evaluative statements

used on the questionaire.

STUDENT EVALUATION: WALK-IN TUTORING, SPRING, 1979

1 Very Strongly Agree
2 Strongly Disagree
3 Disagree
4 Agree
5 Strongly Agree
6 Very Strongly Agree

Evaluative statement	1	2	3	4	5	6
I got enough personal attention at the Skills Center this quarter.	1 2.5%	2 5.0%	0 0%	5 12.5%	13 32.5%	16 40.5%
The tutoring was helpful.	1 2.5%	2 5.0%	0 0%	5 12.5%	13 32.5%	16 40.0%
The tutors I worked with explained things clearly, so I understood.	1 2.5%	2 5.0%	0 0%	10 25.0%	8 20.0%	15 37.5%
Overall, the tutoring service is very good.	1 2.5%	2 5.0%	1 2.5%	7 17.5%	13 32.5%	14 35.5%

[Both the absolute frequency and relative frequency (percentage) are reported for each item. Items left blank by students are not reported]

II. Reading/Writing Skills Center Courses

As was briefly outlined earlier, the RWSC offers several courses every quarter; they are:

GC 1403 Improving Spelling, Punctuation, 1-2 credits
GC 1404 Writing Grammatical Sentences, Developing Organized Paragraphs, 1-2 credits
GC 1405 Communication Skills: Fundamentals of Usage and Style, 3 credits
GC 1406 Improving Study Skills, Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary, 1-3 credits
GC 1409 Communication Skills: Individual Study, 1-2 credits
GC 1429 Writing: Individual Study, 1-2 credits

During 1978-1979, GC 1405, 1409, and 1429 were also offered through

Continuing Education and Extension (CEE). Each course is designed to be self-paced, and individually administered through individual instruction by tutors in the RWSC. Therefore, each course is carefully outlined to the student in an initial program conference in the RWSC (during the first week of classes for most students). At that conference, the format of taking a course in the RWSC is outlined for the student, he is given a syllabus (which the tutor goes over with the student), a pretest, and a first assignment. The student and the tutor set up a folder to record the student's progress and attendance in the Skills Center (one hour per week per credit is required), and to keep a file of the student's work, including quizzes and examinations. The entire first session then, is spent in orienting the student to the course and in giving pretests to evaluate the student's placement in the course. After the first year of operation, some guiding principles became apparent; some of these principles will be borne out by the data about the individual courses which will follow this general discussion:

1) The more frequently the student is evaluated, the more use he will make of tutorial assistance.

2) Posttests should measure the same skills as the pretests, but need not be identical in content if they are identical in form.

3) The initial skill level of students varies dramatically, and therefore, in some of the courses, more than one level of course materials must be available.

4) The easier the course is to administer, the more readily tutors will take the time to assist and explain materials to students, and the fewer mistakes there will be.

5) Some provision must be made for those students who, while working steadily, are not progressing as rapidly as others- or the term "self-paced" is meaningless.

6) Some provision must be made to remind students that regular attendance is a requirement, and that "self-paced" means

"at one's own rate," with the assumption that one is working regularly on the course content.

As much as possible, these principles were used in developing and modifying course materials and syllabi, and in choosing textbooks, evaluative instruments, and formats for courses throughout the year.

The success of the RWSC's courses during 1978-1979 can best be evaluated by examining each course individually. Because of the number of structural and organizational changes, the records are most accurate (with the exception of GC 1403 which changed little in administration) for winter and spring quarters, so Fall, 1979, as a time of transition, has been omitted.

GC 1403: IMPROVING SPELLING, PUNCTUATION

As was noted earlier, this course, developed by Professor William Stockdale, was in many ways the easiest to administer and underwent little change in the course of the year. All of the following figures for fall and winter quarters, as well as the conclusions drawn about the first offering of the course in Fall, 1979, were prepared by Professor Michael Arrington. In all three quarters, students made significant progress in pre- and posttest measures of punctuation and spelling. We have not yet been able to study follow-up results to determine whether the improvement in punctuation and/or spelling carries on into a student's subsequent work, but anticipate doing so in the future.

The structure of this course was simple: 1) Students were pretested in each module they were enrolled in, 2) Students worked through the program for the module (Stockdale's Punctuation Program; Hook's Spelling 1500). 3) Students were posttested in each module they were enrolled in, and they

were allowed to retake the posttest if the first posttest indicated little or no improvement. The following chart shows the results of the pre- to posttest measure for each quarter, Fall, 1978 , through Spring, 1979.

GC 1403: DATA SUMMARY

PUNCTUATION

	Fall, 1978	Winter, 1979	Spring, 1979
Pretest Mean	59.62	60.03	59.58
Posttest Mean	84.70	83.48	83.23
Change Mean*	24.85	23.55	25.20

(Winter and Spring averages are not significantly different from those for Fall.)

SPELLING

	Fall, 1978	Winter, 1979	Spring, 1979
Pretest Mean	42.84	60.03**	58.59**
Posttest Mean	83.14	83.48	84.09
Change Mean*	38.86	23.54***	24.70***

*Change Mean is computed by adding difference scores for each individual, then dividing by the number of individuals; thus, it will not necessarily equal the difference between the Pretest and Posttest Mean scores.

**Significantly different from Fall.

***Significantly different from Fall.

Professor Arrington drew the following conclusions about the fall offering:

1. Improvements in spelling and punctuation as measured by the tests used were both large and significant.

2. Improvements in spelling and punctuation were about the same for both males and females.

3. Improvements in punctuation were about the same for both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Native Language (ENL) stu-

dents. In spelling, however, ESL students made much larger gains than ENL students.

4. It is not possible to make any reliable judgments about the relative improvements in test performance of students based on pretest scores.

GC 1404: WRITING GRAMMATICAL SENTENCES, DEVELOPING ORGANIZED PARAGRAPHS

This course, from the beginning, was the most difficult for both tutors and students. As a result, it underwent fairly large changes, particularly between winter and spring quarters. A chief factor causing difficulties in this course was the wide variety of students enrolled. While the course was ideal for some students, for those who had very serious difficulties with writing sentences, the materials were simply too difficult. Students ranged from those who could not easily write a clear, simple, comprehensible sentence to those who needed to work on sentence style rather than simple grammar and structure. In Spring, 1979, therefore, we attempted to pretest students for placement in one of two tracks of the course. Those whose pretests gave evidence of serious difficulties with sentence structure and very basic terminology (subject and verb), began their work on those basics in one text (Choy's Basic Grammar and Usage), and did the second credit of their work in the original text (Wittig's Steps to Structure). Those whose tests showed knowledge of basic sentence patterns and terminology went through the original course. The results were an improvement. In winter quarter, only 4 students earned grades (of 23 originally enrolled); in spring, 15 (of 25 originally enrolled). Clearly, the revised structure of the course better met the needs of the students, and continued revision was planned for the next academic year. The following data were compiled by Karl Edwards, Graduate Teaching Assistant in the RWSC.

GC 1404: DATA SUMMARY

WINTER, 1979

Course enrollment: 23
Cancelled or received N's without beginning the course: 13
Began the course: 10
Completed the course during the quarter enrolled: 4 (40% of those who began the course)

Grade	# of Students	Average # of visits to RWSC
A	0	--
B	0	--
C	3	17
D	1	5
I	2	13
N	1	12
W	3	15

SPRING, 1979

Course enrollment: 25
Cancelled or received N's without beginning the course: 4
Began the course: 21
Completed the course during the quarter enrolled: 15 (72% of those who began the course)

Grade	# of Students	Average # of visits to RWSC
A	4	14
B	7	13
C	2	10
D	2	11
I	0	--
N	6	11
W	0	--

GC 1405: COMMUNICATION SKILLS: FUNDAMENTALS OF USAGE AND STYLE

"Fundamentals of Usage and Style" continues to be the most basic writing skills course offered in the Reading/Writing Skills Center. In Fall, 1978, it remained the same course it had been before. Students worked through units in a programmed grammar, Blumenthal's English 2600, and took practice unit tests followed by final unit tests. As part of

and took practice unit tests followed by final unit tests. As part of each unit test, the student wrote five sentences on an assigned subject, sometimes with an assigned structure. While test scores were good, the sentences did not improve. Students were learning grammatical rules and learning to identify grammatical structures, but they were not given enough practice in actual writing to apply their knowledge. As a result, they were learning "fundamentals of usage," but not--at least in their own writing--"of style."

In Winter, 1979, the course underwent a major change with the adoption of Helen Mills' Commanding Sentences, a workbook text that taught principles of grammar and style and reinforced each principle with writing practice. The unit tests did the same. The course included a pre- and posttest, identical in form, in which students demonstrated knowledge of principles of grammar and usage, corrected errors, and wrote their own sentences--with each part roughly equal in weight. Students made significant improvements in all three areas, and furthermore, were enthusiastic in their comments about the book. One drawback was that the course was more demanding, since it dealt not only with principles but with practice in applying those principles. The same version of the course was offered in Spring, 1980, with similar results. A second edition of the book--which broke the subject matter into more basic steps--was adopted for the following year. Karl Edwards compiled the following summary of statistics on the winter and spring quarter offerings of 1405.

GC 1405: DATA SUMMARY

WINTER, 1979

Course enrollment: 65
Cancelled or received N's without completing Unit 1: 21
Began the course (beyond Unit 1): 44
Completed the course during the quarter enrolled: 24 (55% of those who began)

Pretest, average score: 43
Posttest, average score: 61
Change, average: +19 (statistically significant improvement)
Final average (unit tests plus final): 79.5

Grade	# of Students	Average # of Completed Units (of 9)	Average # of Contacts in RWSC
A	4 (9%)	9	22
B	11 (25%)	9	19
C	7 (16%)	9	18
D	2 (5%)	9	30
I	9 (20%)	5	18
N	9 (20%)	2.6	10
W	2 (5%)	6.5	18

Average # of contacts in RWSC (all above categories): 18.3
Average # of contacts in RWSC (A-D categories only): 20

SPRING, 1979

Course enrollment: 59
Cancelled, or received N's without completing Unit 1: 19
Began the course (beyond Unit 1): 40
Completed the course during the quarter enrolled: 19 (48% of those who began)

Pretest, average score: 46
Posttest, average score: 66
Change, average: +14 (statistically significant improvement)
Final average (unit tests plus final): 80.7

Grade	# of Students	Average # of Completed Units (of 9)	Average # of Contacts in RWSC
A	4 (10%)	9	32
B	11 (28%)	9	26
C	3 (8%)	9	25
D	1 (3%)	9	35
I	12 (30%)	5.4	24
N	6 (15%)	5.2	17
W	3 (8%)	2	6

Average # of contacts in RWSC (all above categories): 24
Average # of contacts in RWSC (A-D categories only): 28

Spring and winter students performed with no significant difference except in one area. There is a significantly higher attendance during Spring, 1979, than during Winter, 1979. Possible factors might include more accurate records, increased tutor support. In neither quarter was there a significant difference in Pretest scores between those who completed the Posttest and those who did not finish the course.

GC 1406: IMPROVING STUDY SKILLS, READING COMPREHENSION, VOCABULARY

Like 1404, this course attracted a wide range of students, reading at widely varying levels. In Fall, 1978, the course had to be streamlined to deal more efficiently with the resources of the tutors. A booklist of eight titles was cut to three, one in each of the module areas. In Winter, 1979, essentially the same shortened booklist was used, with two basic differences in the course. Parts I and III of the McGraw-Hill Reading Test were adopted for pre- and posttest reading measures, and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test was adopted for diagnostic purposes, particularly for those students who had difficulties with the McGraw-Hill instrument (scores below 25 of a possible 50). Tutors were trained to individually assist very weak readers (grade 2 to grade 6 level) by Karl Edwards, in anticipation of a few readers with serious problems. Results on the tests confirmed the need for such tutoring, to such an extent in fact, that in Spring, 1979, the reading and vocabulary modules were broken into four levels, with an additional text in basic reading (Bracy and McClintock's Read to Succeed) for the weakest readers. The results were significant, as the following data (compiled by Karl Edwards) and conclusions show.

GC 1406, DATA SUMMARY

WINTER, 1979

Course enrollment: 41
Cancelled or received N's without beginning the course: 15
Completed the course during the quarter enrolled: 14 (45% of those who began)

Reading Pretest, average score: 24.6
Reading Posttest, average score: 28.1
Change: +2.9 (not significant improvement)

Vocabulary Pretest, average score: 35.6
Vocabulary Posttest, average score: 84.4
Change: +47.2 (significant improvement)

Grade	# of Students	*Average # of Contacts in RWSC
A	2 (6%)	10
B	7 (23%)	25
C	5 (16%)	21
D	0	--
I	5 (16%)	18
N	7 (35%)	13
W	1 (3%)	18

*Not entirely meaningful because the variable 1-3 credits would necessitate different time commitments to finish the course.

SPRING, 1979

Course enrollment: 43
Withdrew or received N's without beginning the course: 15
Began the course: 28
Completed the course during the quarter enrolled: 20 (71% of those who began)

Reading Pretest, average score: 24.2
Reading Posttest, average score: 29.5
Change: +5.8 (significant improvement)

Vocabulary Pretest, average score: 48.9
Vocabulary Posttest, average score: 76.5
Change: +31.7 (significant improvement)

Grade	# of Students	*Average # of Contacts in RWSC
A	5 (18%)	17
B	10 (36%)	19

C	4 (14%)	14
D	1 (4%)	23
I	6 (21%)	16
N	2 (7%)	10
W	0	--

*Not entirely significant because the variable 1-3 credits would necessitate different time commitments to finish the course.

The change in organization between Winter, 1979, and Spring, 1979, seemed to result in a more efficient and manageable course, as rates of completion indicate. Furthermore, in Spring, 1979, with variable tracks of work in Reading and Vocabulary, both reading and vocabulary posttest scores improved significantly.

GC 1409 and 1429: INDIVIDUAL STUDY

Since the students enrolled in these variable (1-2) credit courses, with the assistance of a tutor, design their own course goals and projects, individual students are not comparable. Unlike the other RWSC courses, which are designed so that each student may work with any available tutor, 1409 and 1429 are individually monitored by a single tutor, with whom the student meets on a regular basis.

The chief difficulty of offering 1409 and 1429 in fall quarter was resolved by a policy which was enforced as of Winter, 1979. During fall, some students contracted to do the work of 1403-1406, since those courses were closed. Two problems resulted:

1) Course closures were circumvented, in effect raising the enrollment of other RWSC courses.

2) Tutor time was committed to these students on a regular appointment basis, though students

in 1403-1406 were not individually monitored by a single tutor.

One further problem was possible: the student could do the work for another RWSC course in 1409 and then sign up for the same course in a later quarter, repeating the same work for additional credit. Beginning winter quarter, therefore, no student was allowed to register for 1409 if the course contract repeated or duplicated the work of another RWSC course.

Figures on course completion rate will be included in the final summary on RWSC courses, which follows.

SUMMARY OF COURSE COMPLETION FOR 1978-1979

DAY ENROLLMENTS

Course	Enrolled and Completed*			Incompletes			No Credit**		
	F	W	S	F	W	S	F	W	S
1403	26	38	30	4	0	2	5	20	7
1404	9	5	17	5	3	5	12	13	8
1405	28	24	21	1	9	9	13	23	19
1406	14	14	22	2	5	3	8	20	12
1409/ 1429	23	24	11	3	4	5	7	9	3
Total	100	105	101	15	21	24	45	85	49

Total Enrollment, Fall, 1978: 160
Completion (%): 62.5

Total Enrollment, Winter, 1979: 211
Completion (%): 49.8

Total Enrollment, Spring, 1979: 174
Completion (%): 58

Total Day Enrollment, 1978-1979 Academic Year: 545
Completion by October 1, 1979 (%): 56.1 (306 students)

*Includes N's and I's made up by October 1 of following academic year.

**Includes all students who did not receive a grade or an I, and who were not officially withdrawn, according to the grade reports.

CEE ENROLLMENTS

	Enrolled and Completed*			Incompletes			No Credit**		
	F	W	S	F	W	S	F	W	S
Course									
1405	12	9	3	3	1	1	4	5	3
1409	4	5	4	0	2	3	1	2	3
1429	8	5	2	1	0	2	0	1	1
Total	24	19	11	4	3	6	5	8	7

Total Enrollment, Fall, 1978: 33
Completion (%): 72.7

Total Enrollment, Winter, 1979: 30
Completion (%): 63.3

Total Enrollment, Spring, 1979: 24
Completion (%): 45.8

Total CEE Enrollment, 1978-1979 Academic Year: 87
Completion by October 1, 1979 (%): 62 (54 students)

Total Day and CEE Enrollment, 1978-1979 Academic Year: 632
Completion (%): 57 (360 students)

*Includes N's and I's made up by October 1 of following academic year.

**Includes all students who did not receive a grade or an I, and who were not officially withdrawn, according to the grade reports.

Course Evaluation

One measure of the success of the RWSC courses is the rate of comple-

tion; another is the pre- to posttest improvement. A third measure is the student's evaluation of the course or courses he has taken in the RWSC. During Spring, 1979, Professor Arrington and I developed a student course evaluation form specifically for use in the RWSC. The instrument was given to all students enrolled in RWSC courses who had contact with the RWSC during the last two weeks of the quarter. The first six items dealt with general information and were followed by 25 items evaluating the tutors, the course goals, the course work, the tests and grading, and the general effectiveness of the courses and the RWSC. Following is a summary of overall responses to the questionnaire. (A course breakdown is also available in Nicholson 118.)

SUMMARY: READING/WRITING SKILLS CENTER STUDENT EVALUATION

SPRING, 1979*

1. What Reading Writing Skills Center course(s) are you enrolled in this quarter?

   1403, 10 students (17.5%)
   1404, 9 students((15.8%)
   1405, 22 students (38.6%)
   1406, 10 students (17.5%)
   1409, 2 students (2.0%

   Students enrolled in two courses (second course listed here).

   1404, 1 student (1.8%)
   1405, 2 students (3.5%)
   1406, 1 student (1.8%)
   1409, 1 student (1.8%)

   No students responding were enrolled in three or more courses.

2. Are you enrolled in day or extension classes?

   Day, 54 (94.7%)
   Extension, 3 (5.3%)

3. Please estimate the number of hours you worked on your course(s) in the Reading/Writing Skills Center this quarter.

0-10 hours, 5 students (8.8%)
11-20 hours, 7 students (12.3%)
21-30 hours, 12 students (21.1%)
31-40 hours, 23 students (40.4%)
More than 40 hours, 8 students (14.0%)

4. Is English your native language?

Yes, 45 (78.9%)
No, 12 (21.1%)

5. Sex

Male, 37
Female, 20

6. Year in college

1, 23 (40.4%)
2, 18 (31.6%)
3, 9 (15.8%)
4, 3 (5.3%)
5, 3 (5.3%)

*Note: 57 students handed in the evaluation. Where the total number of responses does not equal 57, the remainder were left blank. Percentages indicate the absolute frequency of the response.

On 25 evaluative statements, students were asked to "Please indicate the response closest to your opinion by circling the appropriate number. Please circle only one number for each item." Following is a summary of students' mean responses to the items. Where fewer than 57 students responded to an item, the number of respondents is listed in parentheses after the mean. Scale: 1, Very Strongly Disagree; 2, Strongly Disagree; 3, Disagree; 4, Agree; 5, Strongly Agree; 6, Very Strongly Agree.

THE TUTORS:	MEAN
are approachable.	4.596

are friendly to students.	4.737
welcome questions from students.	4.679 (56)
help me feel free enough to express my opinions.	4.429 (56)
whom I worked with have a sufficient grasp of the subject for my needs.	4.574 (54)
gave clear explanations.	4.547 (53)
discussed my work with me.	4.383 (47)
COURSE GOALS:	
The goals of this course are appropriate for my needs.	4.709 (55)
My responsibilities in this course were clearly defined.	4.818 (55)
The assignments (reading, exercises, tests) were relevent to my goals in the course.	4.712 (52)
COURSEWORK:	
The textbook was of the right level of difficulty for me.	4.500 (54)
The exercises covered material presented in the books and by tutors.	4.654 (52)
The text exercises and practices were helpful.	4.765 (51)
The assignments were worth my time and effort.	4.667 (54)
The assignments required the right amount of work.	4.491 (53)
TESTS AND GRADING:	
The tests covered material presented in the books and by tutors.	4.679 (53)
The test instructions are clear.	4.654 (52)
The tests seemed to be a fair measure of my knowledge and understanding.	4.585 (53)
The tests were graded in a reasonable period of time.	4.902 (51)

IN GENERAL:

I can write more effectively as a result of this course.	4.278 (54)
I can read more effectively as a result of this course.	4.471 (51)
I have become more open to the material of this course.	4.389 (54)
I would consider taking another Reading/ Writing Skills Center course.	4.472 (53)
I would recommend this course to a friend.	4.722 (54)
I would consider using the Reading/Writing Skills Center's tutoring service.	4.943 (53)

While individual course evaluation results were, on the whole, very similar to the overall results above, there were some slight differences: 1403 rated comparable to the general results; 1404 and 1405 rated slightly higher than the general results; and 1406 and 1409 rated slightly below the general results.

The responses to two evaluative statements were of particular interest in each course, that is, students' perceptions about their improvements in writing and reading. Following is a course-by-course breakdown:

	COURSE	MEAN	#	TOTAL #
I can write more effectively as a result of this course.	1403	4.300	10	10
	1404	4.400	10	10
	1405	4.435	23	24
	1406	3.800	10	11
	1409	5.000	3	3
	Total	4.278		
I can read more effectively as a result of this course.	1403	4.100	10	10
	1404	4.750	8	10

1405	4.435	23	24
1406	3.800	10	11
1409	5.000	3	3
Total	4.471		

It is not surprising to find that those students in courses that focus on writing and related skills saw more improvement in their writing than those in the course that focuses on reading skills. The mean for those courses focusing on writing skills (1403, 1404, 1405, 1409) is 4.435, for the course focusing on reading skills (1406), it is 3.800. However, it is surprising to find that a number of students in writing skills courses felt they had improved their reading even more than their writing. (This may have been the result of the emphasis placed on reading and following directions on quizzes and tests.) Furthermore, as might be expected, those in the reading skills course saw the greatest improvement. The mean for those courses focusing on writing skills (1403-1405, 1409) is 4.476, for the course focusing on reading skills (1406), it is 4.636.

On the whole, student response to the RWSC courses was positive. The evaluation will be repeated (at least annually), to compare student responses to the RWSC program of courses as well as individual offerings of courses.

Conclusions

The first year of expanded operation of the RWSC was successful. Students responded well to the courses and tutors; and given the nature of individual study and the self-discipline it requires, the course completion rate was satisfactory. An effective tutorial staff was developed, with 75% of the tutors planning to return in Fall, 1979.

During the second year's operation, however, some modifications need to be made to improve RWSC service and course completion rates. These

changes, in operation during 1979-1980, will be evaluated and reported on in a sequel to this document, to be completed by July 1, 1980. This "1979-1980 Report" will examine the following modifications, as well as the growth and development of the RWSC as a whole.

Courses: the complete revision of GC 1404
the partial revision of GC 1406
the effect of the new edition of Commanding Sentences in 1405
the effect of the addition of more frequent evaluation in 1403
the Commanding English RWSC offerings

Tutors: the use of tutor trainees
the use of graduate assistants in monitoring course progress
the use of bi- or multi-lingual tutors

The Center: the effect of crowding in Fall, 1979
the move to a new location
the expanded course offerings in CEE

Students: spring quarter evaluations of walk-in tutoring
spring quarter evaluations of RWSC courses